



United States Department
of Agriculture

National Agricultural
Statistics Service

USDA/NASS
Washington Field Office
P.O. Box 609, Olympia, WA 98507
(360) 902-1940 Fax (360) 902-2091

Washington Crop Weather

Released: January 3, 2007
Month Ending: December 2006
CWP WA-CW0107

Crop Progress and Condition for the Month of December 2006

Western

Grays Harbor: Gale force winds with gusts exceeding 65 miles per hour roared through the county on December 14, 2006 leaving a path of destruction across the rural landscape that had not been seen since the historical Columbus Day storm of October 12, 1962. Agricultural producers were greeted the day after the storm with scenes which some referred to as resembling the aftermath of hurricane Katrina. Most agricultural producers reported numerous downed trees, some degree of structural damage to farm buildings, downed fences and copious amounts of branches scattered across fields and roadways. Ornamental plant nurseries reported devastating damage to plastic hoop houses where the strong wind not only blew away plastic coverings but also bent the steel framework. As a result of the storm damage, producers have had to delay other winter projects such as repairing machinery in order to focus on the immediate needs of roof and fence repair. Initial reports from Christmas tree growers suggest the year was about average in both retail and wholesale sales.

Grays Harbor/Lewis/Pacific: December will be noted for the severe wind storm on the December 13 and 14 that knocked out power in most of Western Washington. Precipitation levels were above average for the month.

Pierce/King: December was very wet with flooding in the middle of the month. There was very little field work due to the high winds and power outages but berries were caned and tied up.

Skagit/Island/San Juan: The month of December was filled with a variety of weather conditions, heavy rains, snow, freezing temperatures and windy conditions. To date no crop losses have been reported due to the extreme weather conditions of December 2006. However, in talking with growers in the area it is a wait and see condition.

Thurston: Agricultural producers were continuing to "dig out" from the gale force windstorm which swept through the county on December 14, 2006. The damage from the storm was exacerbated by the fact that unseasonably heavy rainfall leading up to the day of the storm resulted in supersaturated soils from which trees were easily lodged. Many agricultural producers were faced with the added challenge of being without electricity for nearly a week as utility crews power sawed their way through a jungle of fallen trees and branches. There have been reports of downed fences and moderate structural damage to farm buildings in addition to copious amounts of debris scattered across the farmsteads. Fortunately, most producers were achieving some degree of normalcy to everyday operations as the new year approached.

Central

Benton: Ice storms and more moisture than usual for December. No adverse affects on crops or livestock.

Chelan/Douglas: A significant amount of moisture (snow and rain) received during the month of December. Temperatures were average. High winds were experienced mid-month with up to 87 mph gusts. Some orchards reported tree damage.

Franklin: It was a rather cold December. Precipitation was around average but increased towards the end of the month.

Kittitas: We still have about 10-12 inches of snow on the ground.

Yakima: Average temperatures varied from 17 degrees below normal to 14 degrees above normal, with 2.56 of an inch of precipitation. There were no reports of damage to developing crops.

Eastern

Asotin/Garfield: Moisture conditions improved during December in most areas, with the exception of some areas within Asotin County. Temperatures were about average with the first half of the month below average and the second half above average. The winter wheat crop was in mostly good condition, but very small due to drought conditions last fall. The crop is vulnerable to winter freeze out as there is little to no snow cover in most areas.

Lincoln: The month of December received adequate precipitation, and it was anticipated that this soil moisture and snow cover protected fall planted crops from some days of strong winds.

Pend Oreille/Spokane: The month of December has brought a mixed bag of weather that would be considered typical for the year. We have had snow, rain, high winds and freezing conditions. When the sun shined and the snow was gone the winter wheat actually looked like it had grown and was in pretty good condition. The frozen ground has made for pretty good feeding of livestock but the last part of the year we lost or were losing the frost in the ground and we lost some potential moisture to rain on frozen ground. Cattle were in pretty good shape and the cold weather we have had so far does not appear to have been harmful.

Stevens: Cold temperatures with a lot of snow. Winter feeding continued and hay was available but somewhat difficult to find.

Whitman: Weather conditions were fairly normal on the Palouse for December. After a way above average precipitation total for November, December came in closer to normal. Precipitation was shown at 85 percent of normal in Colfax with most of it in the form of rain. A little bit of snow was received and a little freezing rain. Winter wheat conditions improved with November's rainfall and continued to do so on into December as well.

National weather summary: <http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/waobr/weather/2006/summary/weth1606.pdf>
Washington Agricultural Statistics Service website: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Washington
E-mail: nass-wa@nass.usda.gov

Free e-mail subscriptions are available via automated mailing list for National and State reports. You can subscribe to individual reports and they will be sent directly to your e-mail address soon after the official release time. Subscribe at:
<http://www.nass.usda.gov/sub-form.htm>